

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6336

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Children & Family Services

**Title:** An act relating to the definition of income for public assistance.

**Brief Description:** Requesting a federal exemption regarding the definition of income for public assistance.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Prentice, Fairley, Oke, Fraser, Swecker, Shin, Kline, Rockefeller, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, McAuliffe, Rasmussen, Franklin, Thibaudeau, Jacobsen, Brown and Sheldon).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children & Family Services: 2/22/06, 2/23/06 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**  
**(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services to seek exemptions and waivers from federal laws and rules necessary to exclude military housing allowances from income when determining eligibility for food stamps and medical assistance programs providing maternity support services.
- Requires a report to the Legislature by September 1, 2007, regarding exemptions and waivers obtained.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

*Military Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)*

Persons who serve in the military may receive a military basic allowance for housing (BAH) when use of government housing is not provided. The BAH was instituted following the

privatization of military housing and is intended to assist members of the military who do not live in government housing with obtaining commercial housing. Like the various other military allowances provided for specific needs, the BAH is not taxable under the Internal Revenue Code. The BAH also is not counted as income when determining a family's eligibility for federally-subsidized free and reduced priced meals for school children or when determining eligibility for benefits under the federal Women Infants and Children (WIC) program.

Use of Federal Public Assistance Moneys

Under federal law, each state develops a state plan regarding use of federal moneys for public assistance programs. The state plan is an agreement between the state and federal agencies and includes provisions governing how the state will determine eligibility for receipt of public assistance. The state plan may be modified when a state requests, and the federal agency grants, an exemption or waiver from federal laws or rules.

Under Washington's state plan, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) adopts rules for determining what resources are counted as income for the purpose of eligibility for medical assistance and food benefits. Under those rules, money a person receives from other agencies and that is provided for reasons *other than* on-going living expenses is not counted as income. On-going living expenses, however, include expenses for shelter, and as a result, housing allowances are counted as income.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

The DSHS is directed to seek exemptions and waivers from federal laws and rules necessary to exclude from income military housing assistance when determining eligibility for food benefits and for medical assistance programs that provide maternity support services. By September 1, 2007, the DSHS must report to the Legislature regarding efforts and progress made in obtaining the waivers and exemptions.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The original bill addressed eligibility for all medical assistance programs. The amended bill addresses eligibility for medical assistance programs that provide nurse home visitation services to pregnant women and infants. The original bill required an annual report to the Legislature. The amended bill requires a single report by September 1, 2007.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** None.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.